

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 01124 181636Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01
OPR-02 SY-05 MCT-01 /084 W
-----181637Z 064525 /43

O R 181515Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9939
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY DARESSALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1124

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

MAPUTO FOR AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S DELEGATION

REF: A. GABORONE 1123; B. STATE 112946

1. DCM DELIVERED MESSAGE TO TIBONE MAY 18, DRAWING ON TALK-
ING POINTS CONTAINED IN REF B. TIBONE EXPRESSED SINCERE
APPRECIATION FOR PROMPT AND VIGOROUS EXPRESSION OF USG
SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT FOR BOTSWANA.

2. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION, TIBONE INCLUDED SOME INFOR-
MATION IN ADDITION TO OFFICIAL GOB VERSION CONTAINED IN REF A.
TIBONE SAID HE PERSONALLY WAS CONVINCED THAT RHODESIAN FORCES
WERE NOT ENGAGED IN HOT PURSUIT, BUT WERE CARRYING OUT PLAN-
NED OPERATION WITH BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE (BDF) BASE
CAMP AS TARGET. HE ADDUCED FOLLOWING FACTS: (A) NINE
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OF THIRTEEN BDF PERSONNEL HAD BEEN LURED ABOUT ONE AND
ONE-HALF KILOMETERS AWAY FROM CAMP BY RHODESIAN HELI-
COPTER FLYING VERY LOW AND SLOWLY ALONG BORDER;
ONCE THEY WERE OUT OF THE WAY, MECHANIZED FORCE
AUGMENTED BY ANOTHER TROOP-CARRYING HELICOPTER PRO-
CEDED ACROSS BORDER DIRECTLY TO BDF BASE CAMP; (B)
ABOUT TEN ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS AND TWO TROOP-

FERRYING HELICOPTERS WERE INVOLVED, WHICH LEADS TIBONE TO BELIEVE THE ESTIMATE OF 150 RHODESIAN TROOPS (WHITE AND BLACK) WAS NOT FAR OFF, ALTHOUGH HE CONCEDES IT MAY BE SOMEWHAT INFLATED; (C) THE RHODESIANS ATTACKED THE SMALLEST OF SEVERAL BDF CAMPS RANGED ALONG THAT PART OF THE BORDER, INDICATING THAT PRIOR INTELLIGENCE AND REST OF EFFORT HAD BEEN WELL PLANNED; AND (D) RHODESIANS FIRED EXCESSIVELY, WILDLY AND INDISCRIMINATELY, AND USED LARGE NUMBER OF GRENADES, AS THOUGH THEY WERE INTERESTED MORE IN FRIGHTENING OFF ANY OPPOSITION RATHER THAN INFLECTING CASUALTIES.

3. AS FOR MOTIVE, TIBONE EXPRESSED BEWILDERMENT. TWO HYPOTHESES HE ADVANCED WERE THAT (A) RHODESIANS MIGHT HAVE BEEN TESTING SPEED AND STRENGTH OF BDF REACTION; AND (B) SMITH MIGHT BE TRYING TO PROVOKE BDF INTO RETALIATORY RAID ACROSS BORDER, WHICH HE COULD THEN USE AS PRETEXT FOR MORE SERIOUS OPERATION INTO BOTSWANA. ON LAST ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, TIBONE SAID: "WE SIMPLY CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY SMITH(AND HE IS CONVINCED RAID WAS PLANNED IN SALISBURY) CARRIED OUT SUCH AN OPERATION AT THIS PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE TIME".
NORLAND

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Message Attributes

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